

**Wildlife**

The standards and guidelines for Indiana bat roosting areas have been clarified in coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. These changes, based on comments from USFWS and new information, will provide more targeted direction on maintaining Indiana bat habitat. These changes aid future project design and streamline Endangered Species Act consultation.

**Rare and Unique Biological Features**

The level of detail and direction for rare plants provided in the Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) amendment to the 1987 Forest Plan is greater than that provided in the Proposed Revised Forest Plan. The Proposed Revised Plan approach was taken for two reasons: 1) to avoid repeating direction provided in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2670, and 2) to move detailed operational directions to a FSM supplement. We received comments expressing concern about the level of protection for species of concern that were not listed as threatened, endangered or sensitive. Forest Service staff examined the standards and guidelines and found that some of the standards and guidelines in the 1987 Forest Plan were not yet in the FSM Supplement direction. Without these S&Gs, we would have had to produce analyses on how each site-specific project could affect plants that are species of concern, and then develop mitigation to protect them. By changing the S&Gs to be more detailed we will be able to refer to the protection afforded these plants in the S&Gs.

The Forest Service received comments that the nesting season for peregrine falcons begins earlier than reflected in the Proposed Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. The standard to protect Peregrine Falcon nesting sites has been changed to begin on March 1 rather than March 15 in consultation with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and a peregrine falcon expert. The guideline providing a nest site buffer zone has been extended to a minimum of 660 feet and that

minimum distance may be extended on a case-by-case basis if needed to protect nesting birds.

Forest Service Staff raised the concern that the standards for Great Blue Heron, Northern Goshawk, and Osprey would require surveys for these species before any activity. Identifying “active” nests can be very problematic for goshawks, in particular, as they may have multiple nests that they are working on in any given year, and they can nest almost anywhere on the Forest. Forest Service staff reviewed potential situations in the field while considering the most effective procedures to protect nests when and where necessary. Based on this review the standards and guidelines for these species have been consolidated under one heading with three guidelines which pertain to all three species. This provides greater flexibility for Forest Service staff in project planning while protecting any nest found during management activities.

**Recreation and Trails**

In response to public and Forest Service staff concerns about continued recreation facilities and trail use in management areas where these activities were not consistent with the desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class, the Forest-wide standard requiring that management areas be managed consistent with the ROS class has been removed. The ROS class is a Desired Condition and cannot always be attained but provides a direction toward which to manage. It is not always the best choice for all resources considered for the Forest Service to close trails and recreation facilities and relocate these sites. It is also not inconsistent with management area allocations to have some facilities that do not meet all of the desired conditions. The standard requiring management to be consistent with MA direction has been retained thus requiring management actions to be consistent with the DFC of a particular MA.

The Forest Service received public comment on standards and guidelines for mountain bike use. These comments expressed a concern that biking was allowed only on roads and trails designated for that use (“closed unless